

Mockingbird Times

FOSTER CARE AND HOMELESS YOUTH SPEAK OUT ACROSS THE NATION



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Extending Families: A Look at Kinship Care Nationwide

BY IAN GRANT, OLYMPIA BUREAU



"A mother becomes a true grandmother the day she stops noticing the terrible things her children do because she is so enchanted with the wonderful things her grandchildren do."

Lois Wyse

Over 2.5 million youth in the United States live with family members other than their parents, according to 2000 Census data.¹ These youth live in kinship care, an umbrella term for many arrangements under which youth who cannot live with their parents find a home with grandparents, aunts, uncles, or cousins.

The federal Administration for Children and Families' Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) recently released a paper entitled *Kinship Caregivers in the Child Welfare System, a look at kinship families using data from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW)*. The NSCAW "examines child and family well-being outcomes in detail and seeks to relate those outcomes to their experience with the child welfare system and to family characteristics, community environment, and other factors."²

Broadly, kinship care seems to be a healthier option for foster youth than more conventional non-kin foster placement. Kinship youth are more likely to stay in the same home, stay in the same school (or at least move less frequently), successfully reunify with their birth parents, and live with their brothers or sisters than youth in conventional foster care.

They are more likely to own more than ten books, participate in a hobby or extracurricular activity, and stay at home instead of running away.

Kinship caregivers, however, may not be doing so well. They are more than twice as likely to live in poverty. They are more than twice as likely to struggle with depression or other mental health issues. They are older, poorer, and less supported than non-kin foster care providers.

"Kinship youth...are more likely to own more than ten books, participate in a hobby or extracurricular activity, and stay at home instead of running away."

So how is it possible for them to do a better job with less?

A clue might be found in a comparison of kinship care providers and parents in the general population. The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) applies some of the same home quality measures that the NSCAW applies to foster youth to the general population. When comparing the two groups, researchers found that kinship providers outperformed normal families at certain less expensive aspects of a healthy home, including being more likely than non-poor Caucasian mothers to read to their children at least three times a week.

A National Outcry Led to Action on Homelessness

BY DAVID BUCK



On Wednesday, October 13th, The Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness (SKCCH) hosted the "Supporting Students who are Homeless in King County Summit" which brought service providers, community members and school districts together to talk about the importance of The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This act was one of the first, and remains one only laws to enact a federal level response to homelessness.

This Summit's ultimate purpose was to get the community to understand the importance of the McKinney-Vento Act and how it relates to children's lives. In King and Pierce County alone, there is an estimated 15,000 children that are considered homeless, with an estimated number of 6,272 homeless children who did not attend school.

At the time the legislation passed, these numbers were at an all-time high. The rising numbers of homeless people in communities led to a national outcry for the federal government to take action. The Act, which is named after its sponsors, former Representative **Stewart B. McKinney** of Connecticut and former Representative **Bruce Vento** of Minnesota, was first signed and passed in 1987, and has since been reenacted four times.

This Act has created a wide spectrum of programs that help those that are homeless: from shelter programs, transitional living

programs, food programs, and case management programs. The Act also gives grants to a wide variety of organizations which are independent of the federal program, but also help homeless people. And, when it comes to the children, the McKinney-Vento act is determined to keep homeless children in school and provide the help they need so that their education, which is considered fundamental to preventing homelessness, stay intact.

At the Summit participants learned just how much the McKinney-Vento act really means to children who are homeless. This act allows children to go to school no matter where they live and gives parents the ability to choose the school that best fits their child's needs. It allows children free transportation and to remain in the school they are enrolled in. The big issue is that if youth change schools too often they are vastly less likely to graduate, so that's one of the bigger challenges that this legislation addresses.

When the McKinney-Vento Act was being written there was a lot of movement to contest the bill. Many representatives and legislators didn't want the act to get passed, including, then president of the United States

Over the last decade, child welfare agencies in Washington State and nationwide have begun to push for youth to stay within their families, even if they cannot stay with their parents. These changes in policy and practice have resulted in a \$6.5 billion cost savings nationwide, even as outcomes improve and fewer youth find themselves in the child welfare system in the first place.

These same agencies have been reluctant to extend to kinship care providers the same resources and support that they extend to foster care providers. This too, is changing; The Mockingbird Society itself was a key advocate for the legislation passed in 2010 that grants relative caregivers some of the financial support that non-relative caregivers are entitled to. It's the first step in what will be a gradual change for the better for youth living with relatives.

Nearly sixty-one percent of relative caregivers are grandmothers. They consistently do a better job with fewer resources and more demands than people half their age making twice their income. They are rebuilding our most shattered and vulnerable families from the inside out. They are incredible people, doing incredible things, and they deserve not only our respect and admiration but every shred of support, financial and otherwise, we can provide them.

¹<http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/0347.pdf>

²http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/abuse_neglect/nscaw/nscaw_overview.html#overview

Ronald Reagan. The Reagan Administration did not view homelessness as a problem that required federal intervention. Many people cried out and called it a waste of tax payer dollars saying that the money shouldn't be spent on those who refuse to get a job.

In my opinion, this type of mentality is unrealistic and inaccurate. It also shows lack of knowledge and is highly offensive to anyone who has become homeless and knows first hand that it doesn't take a lot to become homeless, but it certainly takes a war to no longer be homeless.

This is why I chose to focus on the McKinney-Vento Act; which to me is proof that there are people who do care about this world and want for the greater good to truly occur. It is the idea that compassion can help the community, that it takes the compassion of the people to help this world, not hate and prejudice behaviors. The numbers are there to suggest that if it wasn't for the McKinney-Vento Act that the number of homeless in this country would be far higher.

¹<http://www.nationalhomeless.org/publications/facts/McKinney.pdf>

²<http://www.seirtec.org/nche/m-v.php>

³<http://www.k12.wa.us/HomelessEd/resources.aspx>

⁴http://www.psesd.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=121&Itemid=286

Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS



Dear Friends:

As we enter the fall, I always think about family and friends, and the coming holidays, and the expectation or hope that the season brings. Elizabeth Lawrence said: "Even if something is left undone, everyone must take time to sit still and watch the leaves turn."

So in the spirit of those words, I reflect on what I am grateful for everyday. I am so lucky. I have the best job in the world. I get to work with young people from foster care, kinship care, and the streets, who are resilient, and against all odds, manage to gain the skills to lead and inspire the youth who will come after them. I am thankful for their strength; the courage of community leaders and legislators who are willing to advocate for children and families; and, I am thankful for the men and women

who defend our freedom to advocate and stand up for what is right. November 11th is Veteran's Day. And, I want to especially thank and remember those who protect and serve our country.

We are in challenging times, and sometimes it is just a simple kindness or act of showing that you care, that can make all the difference in the lives of others. So, as we enter the holiday season, I ask you to join The Mockingbird Society's effort to help ensure the right of safety and stability to all youth. We remain dedicated to building a world class foster care system. And, on behalf of all of us at Mockingbird I wish you a very warm and Happy Thanksgiving.

Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

Mockingbird Celebrates National Foster Care Month by Highlighting Amara

For 90 years, Amara has been finding loving, adoptive homes for children in our community. During National Adoption Month, we honor the compassionate people who make a difference in the lives of children in foster care by serving as foster parents, adoptive parents, social workers, mentors and advocates. Thanks to these unsung heroes, many formerly abused or neglected children and teens will find a safe, permanent home.



Thank You!

Total Unity Family Services, PCA, Spokane County CASA's, Casey Family Programs for letting us use their building, Sandra Aposporos, Sue Ashmun, Shari Behnke, Cynthia Bogel, Jill and Wayne Brandmarker-Donnelly, Vicki Cleator, Carmella Degrasse, Kathy Faulk, Makeba Greene, Jillian Gross, Jo Ann Herbert, Megan Lantry, Maureen Marshall, Susan and Michael Marthaller, Dana Martin, David and Susan Mekarski, Amy and Loftus Michael, Laurie Minsk, Dena Schoen, Joy Smith, Shelly Swerland, Marcie Wagnor, Janet and John Walker, Peggy Washburn, Steven Wayne

We Welcome Your Work!

We welcome submissions of articles, poetry, artwork, and photography from our young readers who have experience in the foster care system and/or with homelessness. If you want to be published in the *Mockingbird Times*, visit mockingbirdsociety.org and select *Mockingbird Times* under *The Mockingbird Network* or contact us at 206-323-5437 or via email at kara@mockingbirdsociety.org. Note: If you have submitted something before that hasn't been published, we need your submission agreement in order to print it. Please submit again via the web location listed above. Because of space constraints, shorter poems have a higher chance of being published.

The Mockingbird Society: The Story Behind the Name

The 1962 American classic *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee is the inspiration for our name, The Mockingbird Society. Atticus, the widowed father of Jem and Scout, joins Miss Maudie in teaching his kids that it's a sin to kill a mockingbird because "...Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us."

What if we created an organization, a community, indeed a world, in which our most vulnerable children and youth were protected and valued with the same commitment that Atticus had for mockingbirds?

Join The Mockingbird Society today and help us give young people a safe place to nest and sing.

Gays as Adoptive Parents? Florida Overturns Discriminatory Law BY DIAMONIQUE WALKER



After more than three decades, a Florida law banning gay and lesbian couples from adopting children has been ruled "unconstitutional" by its state appeals court. **Bill McCollum**, Attorney General, for the state of Florida fully supported the old law saying: "It's not a natural thing. You need a mother and a father. You need a man and a woman. That's not what God intended." With the millions of youth in foster care throughout the country, I can't imagine there being a reason to take away any opportunity for them to have a happy, permanent placement in a home to call their own and with loving parents, whether or not the parents are a same sex couple.

Researching this law, I found one of the many articles about the story behind the controversy and why the law was changed. It started because of a man by the name of **Martin Gill** and his partner, who were both foster parents. They reluctantly took in two young brothers, ages 4 and 4-months. They were concerned about taking on the responsibility initially because they were planning on moving soon and didn't want to displace the neglected children yet again. It was Christmas time, so the couple gave in and ended up giving them a foster home for the holidays. After nearly a year of having the boys in their home, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) sought out ways to find permanency for the children. That possibly meant separating the two brothers and Gill didn't want that. The only thing stopping Gill and his partner from adopting the young boys was a 33-year-old law banning gays and lesbians from doing so. So Gill challenged the adoption ban, and after four years, he and his partner can now legally call those children their own.

Although the thought of being adopted might be a great idea for most youth and children, for some it isn't all that they expected it to be. An area of concern might

be the affect that this lifestyle might have on children. A young lady that I know was adopted by a lesbian couple and she shared some of her experiences, concerns and struggles with me. She said, "Honestly it's hard for kids to have two parents of the same sex. It was hard for me emotionally and mentally. I never had any positive male role models in my life." She also mentioned getting teased at school which would result in fighting and being expelled or suspended from school several times. Although being out of the system is a great thing, there is always another side

"I'm sure there are many youth that would be more than grateful to be out of the system and into a safe home with parents that love and care for them regardless of the parents' sexuality."

to it. With discretion regarding age, children should be asked if they want to be adopted by a same sex couple. These decisions affect them for the rest of their lives. Speaking to the other side of the argument I asked **Aisha Mansor**, a network participant, her opinion on this touchy subject. "I feel like there are many unfit parents and foster parents in this world. But I don't think it's fair to take the right of being a parent away just because of their sexual preference. There are plenty of kids on this earth that need help and a family. If there are two people who are completely capable of parenting a child in need, I believe that they should have that right", said Aisha. From speaking with these young ladies, I would conclude that: yes, youth should have a say in who is adopting them, but no one should be denied the right of parenting because of their sexual orientation.

In my opinion I think that banning gay and lesbian people from being adoptive parents isn't fair to the parents or to the many youth and children that could have a happy permanent home with them. I'm sure there are many youth that would be more than grateful to be out of the system and into a safe home with parents that love and care for them regardless of the parents' sexuality.

¹<http://www.law.ufl.edu/flawonline/2010/10042010/gayadoption.shtml>

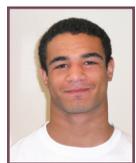
MEET OUR STAFF

Executive Director Jim Theofelis; **Deputy Director** Ros Ghan; **Mockingbird Family Programs Director** Dr. Wanda Hackett; **Youth Programs Director** Tiffany Washington; **Public Policy Director** Rose Berg; **Development Coordinator** Kylie Palzer; **Development Director** Brian Lawrence; **Finance Director** Beth Vance; **Executive Assistant** Lauren Frederick; **Mockingbird Network Coordinator** Kara Sanders; **Administrative Coordinator** Aine Cowan-Kuist; **Administrative Assistant (AA)** Liliana Davies; **Mockingbird Network Program Assistant** Milissa Morgan; **Resource Specialists** Jerry Bobo, Sarah Mahaffy, Graham Parrington, Georgina Ramirez, Tammy Soderberg, Samantha Valle; **Senior Network Representatives** Ian Grant, Terrell Rosetti, Diamonique Walker; **Network Representatives** Amanda Bevington, David Buck, Giovanni English; **Contributing Writers & Artists** Brandy Baxley, Monique Howard, Robert Johnson, Christina Koshney, Tracy Pike, Zach Portch, Noah Stiles, James W; **Design & Layout** Highdive.com

ABOUT US: The Mockingbird Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation developing innovative models for improving the outcomes of foster care, while advocating with decision makers for system reform. All contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Please consult your tax advisor regarding your specific tax situation. *The Mockingbird Times* is a monthly newspaper written and produced by youth who have experience in foster care and/or homelessness. All youth employees of **The Mockingbird Society** are paid between \$9.50 and \$12 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, art work, and poetry and are compensated up to \$25 per published piece. *The Mockingbird Times* has a monthly circulation of over 25,000 copies being distributed across Washington State and the USA, through a private distribution list and as an insert in *Real Change*, a Seattle-based community newspaper. Youth involvement is the key to the philosophy, values, and success of **The Mockingbird Society** and, as such, youth are involved in all aspects of organizational development and decision-making. Donations to **The Mockingbird Society** may be tax-deductible and are greatly appreciated. No part of the *Mockingbird Times* may be reproduced without the written permission of **The Mockingbird Society**. All contents copyright ©2009, **The Mockingbird Society**.

Fostering Connections to Success & Increasing Adoptions Act

BY GIOVANNI ENGLISH



This 2008 federal act entitles youth from the ages of 18-21 all the benefits of a foster youth under 18, if the state implements the new law.

This act helps us to grow up, by opting to remain in the system and get ready to be out on our own. It gives us an opportunity to properly prepare for growing up and being out on our own, and helps us by making sure we don't have to go through it alone. Twenty three percent of foster youth end up homeless after their 18th birthday because they have no place to go. This act gives youth a place to go, if state's take advantage of the new law and resources it provides.

In 2007 The Mockingbird Society was able to get passed a pilot program called Foster Care to 21. This pilot program allowed for 50 youth out of regions 2, 4, & 5 to stay in care up to the age of 23. This means that up to 50 teens in the state of Washington can qualify for this now. But, that is only 11% of 465 youth projected to age out of care each year.

The Fostering Connections act can change those numbers - and young lives - and was developed based off this pilot program and from the success of a separate Independent Youth Housing Program here in Washington. The Fostering Connections Act will enable youth that fit into a specific category of entitlement. This entitlement will enable youth within this category to stay in foster care until the age permitted, preferably age 21 but that has not yet been decided in Washington State. This entitlement will use the Title IV-E money to partially fund this program, and if states are smart will use a 50% allowable match.

WELCOME TERRELL ROSSETTI A Q & A WITH TERRELL



What do you like to do in your spare time?

In my spare time I run and build a screen printing business with a friend that I grew up with. I like to spend most of my time taking care of whatever I have to do to keep myself busy and to keep myself growing. I go to school, so a lot of my time is dedicated to homework. I also like to give back to the community in whatever way that I can. I work for a young adult shelter in the University District called ROOTS. I also work in the YMCA's transitional housing program.

What is your experience with foster-care and/or being homeless?

I was in foster care when I was younger and I eventually was in kinship care until I turned 18. I used to stay at friends houses until I was accepted into The YMCA's transitional housing program which I stayed in for close to a year and a half. I eventually got my own apartment and now I reside in West Seattle.

What are some issues you feel are important in today's society?

If someone was to ask me what issues are important to today's society there would be way too many to list. Everyday I see a struggle in some way; whether it's a friend that can't get a job because he doesn't have legal papers, or because of his criminal background and the choices that he makes that cause him to keep getting caught in what I like to call the 'strug-

gle'. I see people that just don't make it far in life and that itself is an important issue. I am not going to lie and say that it's easy, but some people just lack the will and the environment to see beyond the "struggle". It's a hard ball game out on the streets when you're a young adult trying to figure out everything on your own and trying to get to that twenty dollar an hour paid job with benefits.

In other words, Fostering Connections will be funded by the state and by a federal reimbursement that will bring in \$0.50 for every dollar the state puts up. The cost effectiveness of this policy makes it much more valuable to the state, because they're very few programs where the feds are willing to meet you halfway. This one sees our youth as an investment in the future.

Fostering Connections is not just about replacing another program or federal funding it is about making sure that youth have a place to go and that youth are not aging out of care pre-maturely. If you think back to when you turn 18, not many of us were ready to move out our own. I know that for myself, I will turn 18 in two months, and I am nowhere near ready to move out. I still need to complete high school and start working on college.

If you could change one thing about the Foster/Homeless system, what would it be and why?

If I could change one thing about the foster care system based off my experiences, it would be helping with transitioning those that have experienced foster care or homelessness into successful young adults. So that they will be able to live in the harsh world of reality, whether it's going to school or getting a job. Like I said before it's a hard game for those that have gone through these experiences because they may lack the initiative and hope, most, but not all, lack the resources and people in their lives to get through it all. A little help can go a long way.

Why did you want to be part of The Mockingbird Network?

I wanted to be part of The Mockingbird Network so that I can keep building my professional experience and so that I can grow as an individual. I wanted to expand my network and keep giving back so that I can move forward with my life.

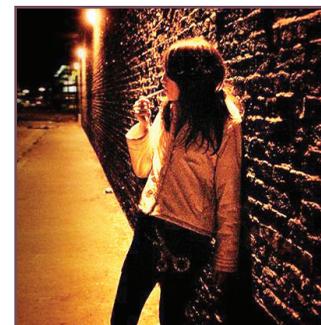
Teen Prostitution

BY AMANDA BEVINGTON



A lot of young girls think that there is no way out of teen prostitution. Many youth feel that prostitution is the only way they know how to make money in order to survive.

They do not realize the harm they are facing because they feel stuck in a hard situation that they cannot get out of. Teen prostitution has only gotten worse. Statistics show more and more girls that are even younger, end up being raped, suffer serious injuries, and even death. How can we show these young girls that there is so much more in life than selling your body to survive? How can we teach young girls to love themselves



Teen prostitution is on the rise

before a predator tells them differently? It's so hard to watch these young girls throw their lives away because of low self-esteem, lack of support and hopelessness. According to the University of Maryland there are about 1.3 million prostitutes in America. An estimated 500,000 are children. Also an estimated 50 -percent of streetwalkers are HIV infected.

Most girls start prostituting because they feel that their life can't get any worse. Most of the girls have mental health issues that have not been addressed, have run away from home, are homelessness, become teen mothers, and simply think that their pimps "love" them and are looking out for their best interest. I had a really close friend that I lost to teen prostitution. She did not die, but the last time I spoke with her was four years ago. We were 16 years old when we ran away from home. She went to stay with her 23 year old boyfriend. I stayed from house to house. When we would visit each other I could see that her soul was dying with each passing day; while the bruises on her body just kept getting worse. She told me that she started prostituting for her boyfriend

because she was pregnant and was desperate to make money or he would leave her. She told me that since she had starting prostituting for him that she just kept getting hurt physically and mentally and it had only gotten worse. He had brainwashed her. She had no control over her daily activities. She was scared that he

would leave her with nothing, if she didn't do as he said. She believed him when he said that he loved her. She told me that "prostitution is addicting once you get used to money in your pockets at all times." She went on to say that "you start to set your standards of living to that level, even if the money went to him." She also said she enjoyed the attention from guys, even if it was in a bad way, because her family never gave it to her.

How can we help these young girls to gain self independence and confidence? To help young girls understand that they are loved weather they believe it or not. There is so much more in life, but you do have to love yourself first, and I believe, let Jesus into your heart. Prostitution might feel like the best solution at first, but you do have healthier options. The longer you stay in that life, the harder it will be to get out and find help. Believe in yourself and you will find the way. There are people out here who are willing to help, but you have to let them in. Don't listen to every man that tells you he "loves you." How can any man love you and not care about your best interests or safety and well being? The pimps only want two things: money and control. Make your own choices in life. Do for yourself. You just have to take life one day at a time, and understand that there are resources out there to help with decision making.

¹ <http://www.wright-house.com/ac/papers97/Name-moved-ac1.html>

² <http://celebgalz.com/help-save-girls-boys-from-child-prostitution/>

Town Hall Features Congressman Jim McDermott and Foster Care Reform

BY DAVID BUCK



On October 15th Casey Family Programs hosted a town hall meeting between US Congressman Jim McDermott and policy leaders with regard to the

foster care reform efforts in Washington State and across the nation. **Diamonique Walker**, Senior Network Representative, and **Kara Sanders**, Mockingbird Network Coordinator, and I were happy to attend. Many service providers and community leaders appeared for the town hall meeting. A panel that consisted of judges and service providers; such as Congressman Jim McDermott, **Janis Avery**, Chief Executive Officer for Treehouse; State Representative **Ruth Kagi**; Judge **Patricia Clark**; and **Dartagnan Caliman** from Casey Family programs who represented the alumni voice; participated in the discussion. Congressman Jim McDermott made a statement about the current political climate affecting the foster care system. He let us know that this meeting was important in order for him to hear concerns, and so that he may effectively create the change we need for children, youth and fami-

lies. He stressed the negative effects of the federal and state budgets on services. The meeting also included a Q & A session.



David Buck, Congressman McDermott and Diamonique Walker

The town hall meeting was a great opportunity to hear the interaction between the community, service providers, and US Congressman Jim McDermott, who has been a constant champion for foster youth and reformation of the foster care system.

The Old Man

By Zach Portch

So proud the old man stands,
 And with unforgotten strength he shys back
 from nothing.
 For one hundred years he has stood his
 ground,
 Without attacking nor defending
 He is neutral.
 Only a statement
 Unrelentlessly we poison him
 And still he smiles and waves.
 The wolf, bear, bird and child welcome
 His never ending embrace
 And with arms warm and wide,
 He lets us rip at his beneath him
 We burn his arms
 And his carcass as a home
 "Old man, don't fear,
 I will nurture your child.
 By my word he will be a fine oak."

Abuse is Wrong

By Robert Johnson

Abuse is wrong
 Abuse is scary
 It's worse than a monster big and hairy
 If you care about your children
 Then you will not abuse them
 Your kids will go to foster care and you will
 go to jail
 You'll be thinking someone will come and
 bail
 No, they probably will not
 Because no one really wants
 someone to hurt their little ones

S.O.D.A.

By James W

When you are mad, you shouldn't act bad.
 S.O.D.A.'s a good problem solver,
 Don't ask me, just call her.

Stop! What are your **Options?** To act bad or
 take space.

Decide and choose how you **Act** wisely,
 taking space is the best way.

Just listen to me,
 Take responsibility,
 Call S.O.D.A., she'll rearrange,
 And your bad actions will be changed

Community Events**Region 1 (Spokane)**

November 1st-30th: *Rough Start Horse Rescue* - Looking for teens to assist horses who have come from abuse. Opportunities for teens to help out in multiple areas of horse care.

November 14th-20th: *Homeless Week* - Events, basic need drives and meals going on all week!

November 18th: "Food for Thought" - 5-7pm. Central United Methodist Church.

Region 2 (Yakima)

November 18th: *Smart Savings for College* - 7pm.

Appletree Resort: (509) 972-2762

November 19th: *Nutcracker Performance* - 7:30pm. Capital Theater

Region 3 (Everett)

Sylvan Learning of Bellingham is hosting a free SAT practice test. All students welcome. Call (360) 738-9590 to register. Space is limited.

Teens are invited to the Bellingham Library's Super Smash Bros. Brawl Tournament! Sign-up begins at 12:45 PM. Free snacks and prizes too! For details, call Bellingham Public Library, (360) 778-7323.

Region 4 (Seattle)

November 26th-December 31st: *Winterfest 2010* - Seattle Center

Region 5 (Tacoma)

November 10th: *Chapter Meeting* - 4pm. PCA

Region 6 (Olympia)

November 18th: *Chapter Meeting* - 4-6pm.

Marina View Room, 3rd Floor, Community Youth Services
 711 State Ave NE, Olympia WA 98506

*"All life is an experiment. The more experiments you make the better."
 ~Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Region 1 (Spokane) UNITE! (Understanding Needs and Implementing Transformations for Everyone) by Noah Stiles

As the summer ends, and our youth are back in school, our chapter is going through some change. Our region is proud to welcome our new Resource Specialist, **Sara Mahaffy**. Last month, Co-chapter leader Josey, Sarah, and Lauren helped facilitate a Culture of Foster Care training at our local juvenile detention center where many attorneys, CASA's, and social workers participated. October marks our first chapter meeting with Sarah, along with a Halloween party! In this meeting, we will discuss our plans for a community service project and inquire about the Chapter leader position that will be available next month.

Region 2 (Yakima) A.C.T.F.I.R.S.T. (Around Community Two Fostering Individual Rights Safely Together) by Brandy Baxley

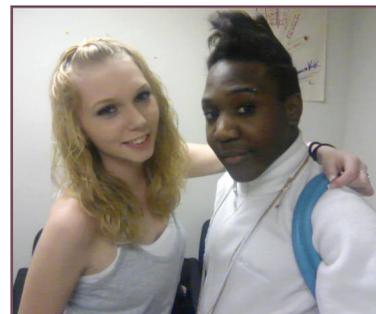
This month we are preparing for the Life Advocacy Training. We are going to visit the Tri-Cities Independent Living Skills Group. While I have been preparing, I have really enjoyed learning about "The Key" because it reminds us of the key things to remember when you are advocating. On October 30th Region 2 will visit the Yakima Corn Maze for a Harvest Party where we are going to roast marshmallows and hot dogs! We did this last year and it was a great success!

**Region 3 (Everett) H.E.Y.M.A.C. (Hearing Every Youth Make a Change)** by Monique Howard

I decided to join HEYMAC for two main reasons: to change the foster care system because I have been in the system and know what it's like, and I have sibling in the system and I want to change it. I want to change it, to give them a better life than what I had and so they are not ashamed to say "Yea I was in the foster care system." I also wanted to get know more foster youth because sometimes it felt like I was the only one going through these changes and that no one understood my situation. Because I have joined HEYMAC I now have some great memories and real life skills from participating in events such as the Foster Youth & Leadership Summit and Advocacy Day. When I went to the capital and talked to legislators about what bills we wanted to pass and how they will change the foster care system we were making a difference. Now, I think I - we - have made a difference in the world, we have gotten a few bills passed. And, I even got to talk to Rep. Mary Helen Roberts about the foster care system.

News From**The Mockingbird Network****Your Needs, Your Voice****Region 4 (Seattle) Region 4 for Change** by Christina Koshney

Region 4 For Change is starting to take flight with our new chapter committees and leaders. Region 4 has decided to take initiative on how we want to organize our meetings to be most effective so we can really be the change we are seeking to enact! We have set the three chapter goals of Individual Development, Civic Engagement, and Systems Change and divided the chapter members into these three committees. Each committee has a leader who reports back to the chapter leaders. This was our first meeting forming these committees and it was a success! Everyone came with good ideas and is ready to take leadership, now we are looking to keep up the momentum. To any Region 4 potential members, we are always looking to grow and invite youth voice! Feel free to contact our Resource Specialist, **Jerry Bobo**, with any questions (206) 838-6646.

**Region 5 (Tacoma) Cour'ige (Changing Our Unique Responsibilities Individualities Gaining Empowerment)** by Tracy Pike

Region 5 is very busy. We are hoping on making serious improvements in our region. We are planning on bringing on another region leader, to assist our two senior leaders. We are also planning on separating our group into three groups - Community Service, System Reform, and Individual Development. We hope that it will organize, and improve our region. We are getting the group prepared for Advocacy Day, also to speak with our legislators. We are looking at new places to serve our community. We are hoping to adopt-a-spot near by, go to a retirement home, or helping children with disabilities.

**Region 6 (Olympia) T.A.F.F.Y. (Truth and Action For Foster Youth)** by Graham Parrington

For my one year anniversary with Mockingbird I've decided to write an article highlighting the achievements of a chapter member. One of the young women representing the foster youth and alumni of Region 6 that was on my interview panel - **Melody Esteves** - has achieved much in the last 12 months, from speaking at Youth Advocacy Day and Legislative Committee Hearings, to co-facilitating a Culture of Foster Care training at the Passport to College Conference, to speaking powerfully at Mockingbird's 2010 Benefit Luncheon in front of 400 people, sharing her story about the importance of transitional housing programs for foster youth aging of out care, and Mockingbird's crucial role in advocating for these programs. She has been able to achieve all this while raising her son and starting a career without the support that a healthy extended family would provide. It is the courage and resilience of people like Melody that make me proud to help build a world class foster care system.